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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Terry Goddard Steps Up Tobacco Sales Enforcement to Minors

(Phoenix, Ariz. – May 20, 2005) Attorney General Terry Goddard today announced its partnership with several local law enforcement agencies to further reduce youth access to tobacco in Arizona.

The Arizona Attorney General's Office conducts undercover investigations throughout Arizona with the help of local police officers, checking retailers to determine their compliance with state laws that prohibit the sale of tobacco to minors. During the investigations, youth volunteers pose as typical teenage customers and attempt to purchase cigarettes from the retailer.

"This program continues to grow and with the help of local police departments, we are performing more investigations than ever before," Goddard said. "I am excited about the partnerships we have formed with these agencies and the impact we are having on this very serious problem. Working together, we can send a clear message to retailers that selling tobacco to kids is against the law."

If during the course of an investigation, a retailer sells tobacco products to a minor, the retailer will either be issued a warning letter from the Attorney General's Office or a citation will be issued to the offending clerk by a local police officer. The partnership between the Attorney General's Office and local police departments has increased the number of citations issued to retailers who refuse to comply with the state's restriction on underage tobacco sales.

The Arizona Attorney General's Office and the Phoenix Police Department recently formalized their partnership to keep tobacco out of the hands of Arizona's youth. The Office also has partnerships with the Tucson Police Department, the Chandler Police Department, the Pinal County Sheriff's Office and the Prescott Valley Police Department. For more information about the Attorney General's Youth Tobacco program or to report a retailer believed to be selling tobacco to minors, call the Arizona Youth Tobacco Hotline at 602-542-1809.

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